The
COMMONWEAL

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Justice and Charity

THE HOLY FATHER has set aside Sunday, November 24, as a day on which he asks in the eclesiastical year, as a day on which he asks all the faithful to participate in a Crusade of Prayer for the following intentions: that "all those who have died as a result of the war may obtain eternal rest, that exiles, refugees and prisoners and all, in fine, who suffer or mourn through the calamity of the present conflict may have the heaven-sent comforts of grace, that, finally, order being restored in justice and minds being appeased through Christian charity, true peace may unite as brothers all the peoples of the human family, giving them back tranquillity and prosperity."

Released Time for Religion in New York

BY A VOTE of 6-1 the New York City Board of Education voted to release public school children for the last hour of Wednesday's regular school time so that, at the option of their families, they can attend classes in religious instruction of their own choice at convenient centers organized by the religious bodies of the community. Why, indeed, should any minority which desires its public school sons and daughters to obtain some religious instruction as an integral and serious part of their education be prevented from doing so by the state or the majority? Religious liberty is the most precious freedom we possess, and, in order to have it active and really existent, such a freedom must give the citizen the opportunity to choose not only the negative of no religious persecution but also the positive of a mode to develop living religion in the individual. In democracy and under our Constitution, the state cannot take away this right without betraying itself, by, at a minimum, forcing a kind of poverty upon its citizens which effectively denies them freedom of choice. It gives them the right to have no religious instruction, but does not provide a chance to get it. The case in New York City is that the overwhelming majority want this minimal opportunity to give their children one real school hour a week for the building of their religion. The regulations protect other families in their tragic right to prevent their children from utilizing the opportunity. It is fantastic that a minority should fight to shackle the majority in its effort to work toward the end of an education they consider best for their children.

Freedom for School Children

Seventeen of the twenty who testified at the final hearing opposed the new regulation. The principal excuse appeared to be the same in most cases, and was voiced appropriately by the best of the opposition, John Dewey. Agreeing that he did not believe that "the men who made the Constitution forbade the establishment of a State church because they were opposed to religion," he still expressed the conviction that the new measure "introduces this division and antagonism in our public schools." That was the expressed fear: religious differences and intolerance. It is perfectly true that if there were no religious belief or knowledge or interest, it would be hard to have religious division or religious antagonism. If you cut off your leg, your toe won't itch. But even that argument which is seen to be actively, bitterly and intolerantly anti-religious, is also a false argument. The religious faith of the opponents of this slight reform is not as negative as some think. They are fighting for an extreme secularism, which, from the subjective viewpoint completely, and from the social viewpoint almost completely, is a religion. They are fighting for a monopoly which they have almost obtained: a free hand with public schools to inculcate their false positivist or materialist or sentimental prejudices in the young. Their method of avoiding religious "division and antagonism" is to create religious uniformity—a state-school religion of indifferentist, secular liberalism. Down with them!

The one hour a week release will not furnish an adequate tool for building religion among the people. Religion is not a "subject" like "math" or "spelling" which can be taught adequately by giving it so many "hours" a term. A vital religion must pervade all the hours and be integrated into

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all the courses. It requires genuinely heroic and highly intelligent work on the part of the families and of the religious organizations to give the public school boys and girls a grounding strong enough to let them build a religious orientation in all their school work and in all their private and public life. This released hour ought to be an enormous help in furthering that religious purpose. It cannot be denied that bad indoctrination of partial religious notions, rehearsed responses, and incompleted religiousness could lead to uncivilized as well as unholy antagonism and intolerance. However, if in their religious life and learning the young people learn either justice or charity, it will be all right, and infinitely more than all right. If they don't, then the nation and religion in the nation are doomed anyway.

The Plan Warrants a Test

Supplies for Europe

SPEAKING at Vassar College last week, former President Hoover gave the data which he has been able to assemble on food and medical needs in Finland, Norway, Holland, Belgium and Central Poland. The population in these countries which now are, or soon will be, in dire want, he gave as 37,000,000, including 15,000,000 children. With the resources which their conquerors have allowed to remain, those who live in rural districts may possibly subsist, but the city populations are completely helpless, for their countries have depended largely on importation. Belgian cities are already under strict rationing, Holland is killing its animals for food, and there is a typhus epidemic in Warsaw. It is Mr. Hoover's conviction that if supplies for these civilian populations are allowed to pass the blockade, they will be safe from German seizure—partly because this was the fact during his own experience as relief commissioner, and partly because he envisions a system of present aid involving only small quantities of food in any one nation at a given time. Moreover, it would be understood that confiscation of supplies would mean that relief would stop forthwith; and Mr. Hoover believes that "it is to the interest of the German army that . . . cesspools of disease and contagion are not created." He would approach the British once more with the request that they allow "one food ship at a time to pass so long as the guarantees are fulfilled," the chief of these conditions being that the Germans will not "take the domestic products of these people, and will furnish the equivalent of any food already taken." Finally, he says that the liquid financial resources of the threatened countries are enough to provide both the necessary supplies and the ships for transport. It is extremely doubtful that the Germans can be induced to return what they have taken; and, in our view at least, any effort of large-scale relief will take a great deal of American money, which should come from both contributions and government appropriation. However, Mr. Hoover has at least given the country a formula to work on, one that seems sound in the main, and invites the respect accorded to experts. Moreover, he does not stand alone; the relief commissions for Belgium, Holland, Norway and Poland back his plea. It ought not to be shrugged off without at least testing the policy of the Germans and of the English and of the American people.

The Polish Czechoslovak Agreement

Toward Federation

A BRIEF DISPATCH from London states that the exile Polish and Czechoslovak governments are determined to enter, upon the conclusion of the war, into closer political and economic association. The plan includes a customs union, a common monetary system and railroad unification, the exchange of goods modeled on the American interstate commerce system. Separate governments and armies will be retained but there will be a common foreign policy and army command. The project of course is no more than the dream of exiled governments and it assumes a German defeat. Yet it has significance. Allied war aims as expressed at the start of the war were based on the restoration of complete sovereignty to nations subject to German rule. It was obvious that if these were the main war aims, an immense discouragement might well overcome the men who are fighting the war, since restoration of the *status quo* could only restore the conditions which led to conflict. Recently an increasing demand has been made within and outside England for a statement of war aims: Mr. Churchill answering that the only aim worth present consideration is that of winning the war. Defining aims now would be to plan for a European order and a victorious Britain to administer it. But the demand for a European order must come ultimately, if it is to achieve reality, from the European peoples themselves. It is encouraging therefore that the first word from the conquered nations should be an appeal for a unity transcending nationalisms. It is in this direction that the revolt from a nazified Europe must come and will come.

Vinegar

"Fair Enough"

ABOUT six weeks ago we reproached Westbrook Pegler with his intransigeant individualism, which, we pointed out, tends in the direction of anarchy. Elections over, he turned his attention to our remarks. We had said: "He seems to think there is something vastly immoral about 'forcing' workers to belong to unions." Mr. Pegler attacks us for our "quote-

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hooks around the word 'forcing,' which is dirty pool and typical of the debating practice of those who take the collectivist side of such arguments. . . . They are meant to suggest that such force does not exist and to create in the mind of the reader a false understanding that I have misrepresented the situation."

That was certainly not the intention. All the quotehooks insinuated was that the word "force" has several meanings. There is, we "collectivists" hold (And the Lord said to Cain, where is thy brother Abel? . . .) proper force and improper force. If Pieface Johnny Buono sticks a gun in the ribs of a non-union painter and tells him to join up, "or else," that is, indeed, a vastly immoral kind of force. But to say so much is not to solve the problem. If a union has a closed shop contract with a firm and if under that contract the firm and the union require an employee to join up when he gets the job, that seems to us legitimate force. Pegler knows perfectly well that we know thuggery and outrageous fees and dues do exist, and that we are as much opposed to them as he is.

We said a few words about the *duties* of social and economic citizenship: "If a man refuses to meet them, the social organism of which he is a part *can properly* coerce him, always within the framework for coercion provided by the Bill of Rights." Mr. Pegler replies, "The answer is that the social and civic duties of the American citizen are defined by the United States Constitution and the laws, along with his rights. The duties are mostly negative, in the form of standard, well-understood verbotens. If he refrains from doing forbidden things he will, generally speaking, perform the positive duties of citizenship, too." A comforting doctrine. By avoiding evil we can be good. By hiring high-priced lawyers to keep us just within the letter of the statute, we become paragons of civic virtue.

Unfortunately that is not the way it works. We said nothing about duties under the Constitution or the Laws. Indeed we referred to the Bill of Rights merely as establishing certain limits to coercion. It is the social organism which "can properly coerce," and it does it by setting up new verbotens as these are made necessary by men's refusal to meet the duties which are required by the natural law.

Mr. Pegler goes on to contend that if it should become socially necessary for men to join unions, then those unions should be appendages of the central government, to whom alone we may owe allegiance—which is, he admits, very close to Mr. Hitler's type of labor organization. Why is this necessary? Because "if the government is good enough to govern the nation, it is good enough to run his union." By the same token it would be good enough to run the whole show. Such argument is truly dirty pool, and typical of the debating practice of lazy-minded individualists who, when confronted with the need for collective action, throw up their hands in despair and, reversing all their natural inclinations, punish themselves and us by acknowledging as possible only the most desperate surrender. Most Americans consider that every man has, and properly has, many loyalties. An American, to use Pegler's language, *is* indeed a citizen of a union (or a church or a profession or a club or a football team) as well as a citizen of the U. S. A.

The Latest Business Boom

Pump Priming with Steel

THE EFFECT on the national economy of awarding $4,500,000,000 in defense contracts since July 1 is marked. The politically minded are chortling over the sharp rise in the index of national production. And the way Secretary Perkins's estimates of 6,000,000 to 8,000,000 new jobs are played up in the press seems to indicate that at last we are finding a solution for the problem of unemployment. This estimate appears to be somewhat exaggerated. CIO's *Economic Outlook* says that steel plants employing 35,000 less men than in 1929 are producing more than ever before, and the American Youth Commission tells of 4,000,000 young people aged 15 to 24 out of school and out of work. But the question is whether this method of priming the pump is any solution at all of the crisis of capitalism. Is John L. Lewis right in saying that a war economy carries within it seeds of economic collapse when peace is achieved? Or are the four University of Chicago professors right when they say of "Economic Mobilization" that more guns will mean more butter, so long as there are unused productive capacity and idle labor. It is difficult to see how the cessation of demand on shipyards, plane factories, steel plants, munitions works, uniform factories and the like will not throw the country into the deepest depression yet. *Barron's* quotes Richard Gilbert, national defense advisory consultant, to this effect: "When the crisis [the war] is over, we are not going to be able to say that government investment and a high national debt are all right for defense but not for providing security and decent living standards." Perhaps that is why record earnings and backlogs of unfilled orders are not, in fact, making investors any less wary; people fear the debt and the end of the spiral.

At the same time there are other disturbing factors which must not be left out of account. The President has said that wages and hours standards must be maintained in the defense program. In the past few days, however, such men as Alfred Sloan of General Motors, Dean Donham of the Harvard Business School, Counsel Leo Wolman and Dr. Millis, new chairman of the NLRB, have

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advocated lengthening the working day in the interests of the defense program. Of a similar character was the descent of the army on the striking Vultee airplane plant. There is some shortage of skilled labor now, plants are expanding and the natural pattern is for labor to seek better wages and working conditions. Communist Party members and fellow-travelers who are union leaders also can be expected to encourage strikes in accordance with the present Moscow line of cooperation with Hitler. So it is not an easy problem. Employment in defense industries does result in greater demand for consumers' goods. But this is not a business boom in the ordinary sense. And it may be working against the development of industrial democracy, toward a kind of national socialism. The social problem raised by modern industrialism remains unsolved, is actually becoming more acute. Can government priming be financed in such a way that debt service will not consume too much of the effective national income? Can government patronage of industry continue without abrogating democratic liberties?

National Art Week

NEWS of the death of Eric Gill, easily one of the foremost of contemporary English sculptors, lends a particular poignancy to the plans which have been formulated for our own national art week (November 25-December 1). For Gill was not only a fine worker in stone and wood, a superb draughtsman and engraver, he was also a compelling writer on esthetics and a social prophet, spiritually akin to the prophets of Israel, whose function lay as much in reproaching a stiff-necked people as in preparing the way of the Lord and foretelling the economy of history. Gill endlessly—almost tediously—pointed to the effects of industrialism and finance capitalism on man and on art, pointed to their denaturing man as a maker and hence as an artist. For Gill took with utter literalness that definition which holds art to be the right making of things, whether that making be the frying of an egg or the painting of an altar piece. So he insisted that in our society the artist is a freak, a misfit, scorned by ordinary people and materially rewarded only to the extent that he can by his talent either flatter the snobbery of society or serve its less noble ends. His only hope for art, then, lies in some revolution whereby the power of money and the cult of the machine will be put back into their proper subordinate places.

For all this people either laughed at Gill, or at best thought his pessimism an exaggerated pose to which sensible, practical folk need give no heed.

To such the very need for a national art week gives the lie. It officially recognizes, through the voice of the President of the United States, that "the majority of our artists and skilled craftsmen are still engaged in what must be called a marginal occupation." Which is merely a polite way of saying that if you devote yourself and your life to the right making of things, you are mighty likely to starve. For it is a simple fact that the machine now supplies many needs formerly supplied by the artist. And yet, man being what he is, there continue to be artists, men and women in whom there is a compelling need to make things.

The fault does not, of course, lie altogether with the public. The effects of our machine-and-money society in this department have produced an organic cleavage, a sort of negative magnetism, whereby the less the artist's services have been needed for utilitarian purposes (pottery, furniture, clothes), the less also has the artist been inclined to temper his talents to please a wide human taste. Not only has there ceased to be a market for the artist, but the artist himself has responded to this neglect by a snobbism of his own, which has widened even more the cleft between him and the society in which he lives.

October, 1929, served to dry up even what springs of patronage still flowed. Public assistance in the form of WPA projects nobly helped to save many an artist and craftsman. But now, with national defense using more and more government funds, it is a question how long even this patronage can continue.

The obvious common sense solution is to try to build up a broader popular base of support for the artist's production, which means that three things must be done. People must be persuaded to want works of art badly enough to be willing to lay out money for them. Foolishly high prices (based largely on dealers' capitalizing on the snobbery of the rich) must be reduced. Finally artists must mend their ways enough to produce things people can conceivably be induced to want. Against all this works some of the pressure of our time—the top hats and frock coats in which Gill clothed the money changers in his Leeds war memorial.

National art week is an honest effort to achieve these things. It has placed a primary emphasis on the question of price. The Chicago committee, for example, has set $50.00 as the maximum price of any article. The thousand-odd exhibitions throughout the country will at least make artists' work accessible to people in whom there may be stimulated a desire to buy. And perhaps the snobbery of the artists will be lessened if they see the public pay some attention to them. Nor should disappointing results too greatly discourage the committees in charge, for such things take time. At least the effort will in the long run tend to show whether Eric Gill was right in his contention that only a revolution in our way of life can restore the artist to a worthy position in society.

H. L. B.

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Back of the Stockyards

A remarkable community technique is developing Back of the Yards, one of the nation's most impoverished large industrial areas.

By **Edward Skillin, Jr.**

THE GIRL with the string of pearls and the turquoise blue sweater gave up trying to type, when she sensed that I wanted to talk while waiting for my first interview on the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. A man's chocolate colored soft hat on the corner of her desk had indicated that another visitor was holding forth in the inside office, and the girl had brought out word that there would be a five-minute delay. She countered my profession of ignorance about the movement with a smile and a sigh, "It's too big for me."

The girl's eyes flashed as she began to talk about herself. "I've worked in a number of places. For several years it was a newspaper office, and that was exciting enough, I'll admit. People are right about that. I have also worked in an advertising agency, and it's true that there's glamor there, too. A few months ago I was with a law firm here, and everyone was as informal and nice as they could be. That wasn't bad fun either. But this is different. You know, people don't seem to have anything to live for today. I don't mean only the poor, or factory workers, say, but people in my class, too—I don't know what class you belong to. What's the difference whether they spend the evening at the movies, play bridge, or listen to the radio? Many a time I've said to myself what does it matter whether I send out this business letter or that business letter—whether a letter even goes out at all? Those things, when you get right down to it, have no real meaning or importance. But when you start doing things for other people! To tell the truth, I've been here for only a few weeks, but the thing's got me." We scarcely noticed that the visitor had crossed the threshold and was picking up his hat. So I had to interrupt this interview and go in to the official one.

* * *

The Back of the Yards area in Chicago in one direction—don't ask which—extends from Thirty-fifth to Fifty-fifth Streets; and the other from Halsted to Western. It houses 80,000 people of Czech, German, Irish, Lithuanian, Polish and Slovak extraction most of whom work, when employed, for Armour, Swift, Wilson and other packers. They represent the various nationalities that were brought in to work for low wages on successive occasions—all except the Negroes, that is. Their area has been built up for about fifty years. For the most part the houses are dingy frame buildings of various heights and depths. Most of them are broken up into family dwelling units, as many as twelve to a house. All have running water, and the toilets are set in the halls between adjacent dwelling units. Bathubs are scarce—over 90 percent of the houses are without them—radios are plentiful. Taxes per house are $25.00 or less, and the tenants themselves pay some of the rent by making necessary repairs, so that what the landlord takes in is largely profit. This is an obstacle to a large scale housing program.

Another indication of the poverty that exists there is the absence of garbage cans. Refuse is thrown out into back alleys where it is collected by a man with a shovel, a wagon and a team of horses. Many of the streets, too, are in disrepair, and while the tension resulting from long blocks of high brick tenements of the New York type is absent, the area looks drab enough. Weddings, which set back family finances for at least six months, are perhaps the brightest occasions for the neighborhood, and instead of a conglomeration of knicknacks and crockery, friends of the couple pay $5.00 each for dancing with the bride.

Back of the Yards is a populous neighborhood; seven grade schools and three high schools are required to take care of the children. Churches are many, and they form an imposing part of the skyline. The area is predominantly Catholic. These churches are popularly known by their national names: the Irish Church, the Lithuanian Church, etc. As economic pressure increased, and the area's reputation for crime and juvenile delinquency became more notorious, the tendency grew to revive old national hatreds. The Pole blamed the Lithuanian, the German the Czech, etc., for the bad name of the neighborhood.

Statistical studies of the district do not bear this out. It was shown, for instance, that juvenile delinquency at the rate of at least one in ten was characteristic of a district throughout the years when one national group after another moved in and moved out. Boys of each nationality managed to get into serious trouble with distressingly similar frequency. The conclusion was inevitable that the area itself and the low incomes of the people that lived there were largely responsible.

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As you walk or drive around the Back of the Yards area today, you are struck by the prevalence of two things: taverns with bright Neon signs, and boys' social and athletic clubs. Just now there are also a good many abandoned taverns—in view of the Back of the Yards movement, an indication that the social consciousness of the area is growing. The extent to which the activities of the Council reach down to the individual citizen is indicated by the fact that with 80,000 people in the area, 10,000 a night attended recent CYO Boxing Bouts, while 50,000 people turned out in each case for two recent parades.

If the one I visited is any criterion, the taverns themselves are not particularly iniquitous. The proprietress, a middle-aged widow with several children, was quietly playing pinochle with some of her customers. She insisted on giving us a "shot" with a chaser of beer (popularly known as a "boiler-maker's special")—all on the house. It was her way of showing her gratitude for what the Council is doing for her.

If anything, the athletic and social clubs formed by the boys themselves are on the increase in size and numbers. They used to be the medium for terrific gang fights. In the earlier days of the stockyards, "pig-sticker" knives would sometimes come into play in these gang battles with genuinely murderous results. Today, such organizations as the Arawaks, the Wings AC, the Robins, the Hearts AC and the Wildcats, for example, are genuine social and athletic clubs. Their rivalry is now confined to the playing fields. They work together to further the program of the Council, and to put over each other's periodic "socials." With intelligent and sympathetic guidance, these wilder counterparts of New York's cellar clubs have become a splendid agency for constructive community progress. A number of them are forming their own Junior groups. Juvenile delinquency is sharply on the wane.

Members of the council

The letterhead of the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council carries a cut of a clergyman standing between a man in overalls and a business executive, with a factory with steam up in the background. The two Honorary Directors are Auxiliary Bishop Sheil of Chicago, who is universally acclaimed as the inspiration and guide of the movement, and Van A. Bittner, President of the Packing Workers Organizing Committee (CIO).

The Executive Board of twenty-five includes such community leaders as the publishers of the local newspaper, representatives of the neighborhood Chamber of Commerce, the YMCA, the American Legion, various parish societies and youth groups, and leaders of the athletic clubs. It also includes Joseph Haas of the American Federation of Teachers (AFL), Frank McCarthy of the Packing House Workers (CIO), executives of the Lewis Clothing Store and the Goldberg Clothing Store, Captain McCarthy of the Chicago City Police, Dave Rosenberg of the Quality Food Store, Jacob Arkiss of the Leader Laundry, and the Very Reverend T. J. Bobal, the Reverend Justinian Kugler, the Reverend Archimandrite Timon Muliar, the Reverend James J. Rowley, the Reverend Bernard Sokolowski, and the Reverend S. Valukas.

The Vice-President of the Council is Bill Bonnets of the Boiler-Makers' Union (AFL); the Reverend Ambrose L. Ondrak is Treasurer; Saul D. Alinsky, of the Industrial Areas Foundation, is Technical Consultant. Most actively engaged of all is Executive Secretary Joseph B. Meegan, Supervisor of Davis Square Park, Chicago Park District, the neutral meeting ground of the Back of the Yards area—a place where antagonistic groups could meet without losing face. In addition to the busy community center, Davis Park has extensive playgrounds, apparatus and a large swimming pool. The makeup of this Council gives a good idea of the range of the groups which participate. It cannot be overemphasized that the Council does not speak for any single group or class but promotes the interests of the whole community.

What the council does

The Executive Board of the Council meets every two weeks or so, on whatever day happens to be most convenient for most of the group. As Dave Rosenberg says, "We can talk any time; let's act." So each Board meeting is called to deal with some specific problem, such as health, school lunches, unemployment, etc. Board meetings often taken the form of a week-day luncheon. The Council also calls community meetings every so often to take up the same sort of problem. Davis Square Park was the scene of a Community Relief meeting November 1. It was the height of the recent election campaign, yet both Democratic and Republican leaders were on the platform and collaborated in friendly fashion. In the near future a community meeting will have store and plant employers tell the rank and file of the young job seekers of the neighborhood just what qualifications they are looking for in prospective employees. It is hoped that some means of applying for work will be found to supplant the fruitless, discouraging round of stores and factories. In the past year or so the Council has procured 2,400 jobs for people in the neighborhood.

Discussions are looked upon as preliminary to action. The Council also serves hot lunches daily to some 1,400 school children at the Davis Square Park Community Center with the help of the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation. There is

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no red tape; no questions are asked. The food is wholesome, the diet balanced, and the children may have as many helpings as they wish, even of dessert. The way the plates were obtained for this project points to the fact that money is not always needed. All the dishes were secured by writing for contributions in kind to such hotels as the Palmer House, the Stevens, the Bismarck, etc. Plates bearing the insignia of these and other hostelries are among the Davis Park establishment's proudest exhibits. The effect of these good meals on the health of the community is incalculable, and at one point it was discovered that in the course of five weeks each child had gained an average of four pounds. Children literally "eat democracy" there. "Not only Bats and Balls, but Bread and Butter" is the slogan.

Bathtubs are indeed scarce in the area, but at the Davis Park Center there are showers for men and for women, for boys and for girls. They are open daily, but on Saturday afternoon and evening more than 400 men and over 350 women avail themselves of these free bathing facilities.

Another important work is carried on by Infant Health Stations, one of which is situated at Davis Park. This community center also sends out two visiting nurses to follow up the work of the health station. Two years ago, one out of every ten infants in the area died before reaching the age of two; the proportion today is 4 out of 600.

Boosting each other's interests is another characteristic of members of the Council. When members of the Chamber of Commerce took out advertising in the program book of a mammoth CIO picnic last June, the union men, as a mark of gratitude, suggested that a sales week be held in the local stores, and increased the ordinary receipts of that week by 25 percent. Local priests and labor leaders will soon take a leading part in a 100 percent membership drive put on by the Chamber of Commerce for the commercial section of the community. Mutual assistance of this kind extends to smaller groups also, to such apparently minor things as taking tickets for each other's parish or athletic club socials.

When the movement started the local newspaper published only a four-page edition which provided only a small income for its sponsors. The paper has 12 pages today; its circulation is 20,000 and the enterprise is flourishing. Activities of the Council and its component organizations comprise almost all the news items; and the paper has been carrying on a campaign for cleaning up the streets, safer traffic control and other measures of civic improvement.

Perhaps the most spectacular of the Council's material accomplishments was the clearing of a two-square-block recreation field, formerly a desolate patch of unsightly weeds. The Jungle Jamboree, first birthday party of the movement, May 3, due to the efforts of storekeepers and packing workers, athletic clubs and parish pastors, realized over $1,500 for the Council. Everyone took tickets, and various individuals and organizations spent over $1,000 for advertising in the program.

In recent months families and individuals in the district have come more and more to bring their problems to members of the Council's Executive Board. They have found, for instance, that this is the most effective way of obtaining home relief. In many cases the executive board member takes each appeal as an individual responsibility which he handles by himself, sometimes paying for things out of his own pocket. In other cases he refers the problem to another member of the board whose contacts make him better fit to assist on such a problem. Characteristic of the spirit of the movement is the way Miss Elizabeth Donnellan of the Chicago Relief Administration has handled all the area's relief problems, serving without salary as a most competent relief consultant.

The good effects of this growing willingness of citizens to submit their problems to an organization in which they play an active part are particularly noticeable among the boys. In former days flashy gangsters and politicians who sought publicity through handouts were their heroes and models. Today, it is the socially minded members of the Neighborhood Council Executive Board. What really set the boys thinking was the allocation of $50 to each athletic and social club, obtained by the Council from the Community Fund. When the boys first heard of the possibility, they simply couldn't believe it. Why should anyone suddenly want to give them any sizable sum? Then many of the boys thought of throwing it away on one big blowout or beer party, but the money brought with it a real sense of responsibility. By the time the allocation arrived the boys had almost all decided that the money must be spent for useful purposes. The guidance of these groups originally organized by the boys themselves has been one of the Council's most valuable accomplishments, for the Wings, Arawaks, etc., are now among the most enthusiastic promoters of community progress, well aware of their civic responsibility and importance. The clubs have a coordinated neighborhood program. Their colorful uniforms are symbols of the constructive turn in their outlook.

Life is still far from idyllic in the Back of the Yards area. Although the Council has improved local relief standards, the basic problem of poverty is still there. Now that the industry is organized and pay has increased from the minimum of 46c to 62½c per hour, workers have more to live on. Perhaps in time the packers will work out some production schedule as Hormel has done in Austin, Minnesota, which will prevent the work

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from being temporary, highly seasonal, and will set up an annual living wage. If this is done, living quarters and living conditions inevitably will improve.

Saul D. Alinsky, the Technical Consultant, has spent a number of years studying conditions at first hand with the Institute for Juvenile Research and the American Prison Board. He seems to have a remarkable grasp of the outlook of underprivileged and criminals. He has focused his activities on industrial areas, because of a conviction based on the closest observation and intelligent study that slum dwellings, crime, disease, and juvenile delinquency are traceable directly to inadequate family income. Low income is the key to the whole problem. Obviously wages cannot be raised in one city by itself without resulting in the removal of industry to other cities where wages are low. Obviously many community problems stem from destructive economic forces originating far away; no single community can cope with them. Therefore many neighborhood councils must be organized to form an organization of sufficient magnitude to be able to cope with these major destructive forces which impair the entire life of the community. The Industrial Areas Foundation, therefore, has been organized to set up neighborhood councils in other American industrial cities. Councils are already in operation in Kansas City and South St. Paul, with other western cities getting ready to establish councils of their own. The Back of the Yards technique is best suited to areas where the men work in nearby plants.

Mr. Alinsky seems to serve somewhat as the philosopher of the movement, although he is not yet 35. He has seen community settlements flare up and fail again and again because the directors of the settlement came from outside, and failed to see through the eyes of the people the problems of their community. Social workers simply do not realize how widespread is the conviction among the underprivileged that people of means go into social work largely for the sake of publicity. The underpaid have too often observed that a man who gave liberally with one hand was bearing down much more heavily with the other through low wages or high rents. Mr. Alinsky therefore believes that it is only when leadership for community rehabilitation comes from the people themselves, that it will be successful. That is why he says in connection with the Chicago Back of the Yards area, "The hope, the destiny of democracy, which includes the welfare of the Catholic Church, is given a great impetus by the emerging of such capable, aggressive, courageous young leaders as Joseph Meegan, who has been working under the careful eye of Bishop Sheil."

Perhaps the greatest significance of the Back of the Yards movement in these days where democracy is so widely accused of lacking dynamism and effectiveness is its genuinely democratic character. Not only does it seem to operate to benefit every class and group in the community, but it is something on which every class and group which lives there collaborates for the common good. As far as I could gather this does not yet apply to the packers themselves, at least as far as active participation in the movement goes. The chief cooperation of business seems to be that of local storekeepers and the neighborhood paper; it does not yet directly involve stockholders in the big packing plants.

Everywhere you go in the Back of the Yards area or among the leaders outside who are interested in the development of the movement they have a good word to say for Bishop Sheil. Mr. Alinsky says, for instance, "The entire movement would have been impossible without the help and guidance of a man I regard as one of the greatest living Americans—Bishop Bernard J. Sheil." There seem to be lots of reasons for their enthusiasm. Perhaps the chief one is the part that the Bishop played in turning the scales in favor of recognition of the CIO by his historic appearance to speak for the workers of this union at the Chicago Coliseum at a time when practically everyone else refused to deal with them. The result of his intervention was electrical. The recognition he gave brought about the signing of a contract with the packinghouse workers for the first time in history. The men in the Yards and their families will not forget this act of courage. It is well known out there that Bishop Sheil received a number of threats on his life—not crackpot letters, but genuine threats which meant business—in order to deter him. And later, when the Back of the Yards movement came up for consideration he gave it every encouragement, attended many of the meetings and defended the movement against the most violent attacks. Through the active Catholic Youth Organization which he sponsors, he was able to do a good deal more for the people of the area. He gave scholarships to the remarkable CYO Aeronautical School and last summer sent 70 boys from the area to CYO summer camps. He keeps in constant touch with the progress of the movement. When I asked Bishop Sheil why he was so deeply interested, he replied that it was because the Back of the Yards Movement enabled the people to express in action their present needs and their aspirations for the future. He seemed to feel that now parish and pastor were one, fighting side by side, shoulder to shoulder, for the physical as well as the spiritual well-being of the people as a whole. In other words, a movement such as this in Bishop Sheil's opinion is a manifestation of genuine democracy. The whole technique appears highly consistent with American traditions. The Council has for a motto: "We the people will work out our own destiny."

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Wine From These Grapes

What the publishing firms have been doing for art.

By **Jerome Mellquist**

WHEN France fell somebody said, "Now is the chance for American art!" Somebody else asked, "Are you sure that we will suddenly displace France as a wine-growing nation, too? Isn't that wine the result of old vineyards tended for centuries by peasants who loved them? And isn't a similar love, and a similar tradition, and a no less beneficent nature, necessary if a like vintage is to be produced elsewhere?" The first speaker did not answer. No doubt he was a good American, and still went on hoping.

How many of his fellow-countrymen will think the same about National Art Week? Yet obviously we shall get neither vintage nor art by mere push and go. Still less shall we get them by a sense of duty well done. Maturity is necessary. If, instead of congratulating ourselves and indulging in busy salesmanship, we devote the week to scanning our "vineyard," to estimating our husbandry, and to impartial assessments of our yield, then, perhaps, we may expect a richer harvest in the future.

Art books particularly require such attention. Yet, until a few years ago the very project of quality art books or fastidious reproductions on a countrywide scale had been inconceivable to the publishers. However a new appetite is in the land. Now every publisher feeds it. The question is, What of the fare? How stand the current lists?

The books

Audubon, for example, is known to every schoolchild. The writer can remember how a sixth-grade teacher vivified the class-room with little reproductions of the red-breast and the yellow-hammer. Still, it was not until three years ago that a commercial publisher attempted, in our time, to issue Audubon reproductions on a scale and in a manner befitting the originals. His success was beyond his expectations. This fall Houghton Mifflin ("Audubon's America," $6) have surpassed this earlier edition. They include but 17 plates in their volume. But what splendid plates they are! Colors match, values are correct, no slightings emphasize off-tones elsewhere—every page is just as it should be. Moreover, they present the many-sided Audubon—not merely the bird-lover, but also the animal student and the painter of rustic scenes. Even a landscape of Natchez, Miss., is included. Those who wish to see what he looked like have only to turn to his self-portrait, and there he is—hunter-eyed, lock-mouthed, all a-mettle. Selections from his writings enhance these reproductions.

No less determined than the man of the wilderness is a contemporary—a woman—who arises, as he did, from the central regions of America. Wanda Gág and her book ("Growing Pains," $3.75, Coward-McCann) depicts both with words and illustrations (46 pages of them) her life from adolescence until she left Minnesota for New York. She has sought neither smock nor béret. Born of Bohemians—father a decorator and Sunday painter, mother a descendant of wood-cutters and cabinet-makers—art in her home augmented life somewhat as it does with the peasants in Europe. Her father dying when she was 15, she not only educated her six brothers and sisters, but supported herself and completed her art education. Here are her early sketches—a sister dishing out ice cream on Christmas Day, a pattern-like affair of candy-making, then later portraits, and finally her more "official" studies from art school. But "they" never captured Wanda Gág. She remained at 24—when she leaves us—as she was at 15, a stubborn, talented, well-directed exponent of that undying American pluck which makes its way despite everything.

When Miss Gág obtained her scholarship, it was to the Art Students League of New York. There she attended class under some of the men listed by Marchal Langren in "Years of Art" (McBride, $4.50), an unusual book which chronicles the 65-year career of a lively American institution. The League, he says, arose when it was felt that the National Academy tethered its students too close. They organized their own school and have kept it going ever since. Such an account might well be dry, but it isn't. Mr. Langren flavors it with friendly drawings of the earlier period, with photographs of teachers and students, with a lightsome chapter on the pranks of the so-called "Fakirs." He clinches the book with 75 plates of works by individual teachers. Unfortunately Mr. Langren attempts no evaluation. Had he done so, he might have contributed more than a chronicle.

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Among those associated with the League, according to his story, is Guy Pène du Bois, author of the personal account entitled "Artists Say the Silliest Things" (American Artists' Group, 36 illustrations, $3.75). Perhaps the most forceful pages in the volume are those devoted to student days under Robert Henri. "Life certainly," says Mr. du Bois, describing Henri's first entrance into the classroom, "on that day strode into a life-class." He fought, he shattered, he chastised, he exhorted. He broke down weakness, he built up strength. Yes, Henri was a great teacher, and Mr. du Bois makes us see him so. Otherwise, his book recalls a French family childhood, a misfit father who challenged American values, and a son who never forgot. His maturity interests less, because, while the edge remains, it cuts to less purpose than the father's. The illustrations (some in color) lose none of that woodenness which has always militated against du Bois for the present observer. Satire may direct itself against a silk hat if it chooses, but if that hat embodies nothing, what signifies the satire? So it is with du Bois: he hates, but he does not vivify in the process.

Rockwell Kent ("This Is My Own," Duell, Sloan & Pearce, $3.50) was a contemporary of Mr. du Bois at the Art Students League. Both are related in the further fact that they approached painting with a vigor unknown to the preceding generation. But whereas Mr. du Bois is a satirical realist, Mr. Kent composes advertising men's fantasies of the Far North, or decks out Moby Dick in similar fashion, or patterns *à la* Blake. But Mr. Kent is a personality as well as a professional artist. And that personality has a lot of pepper. In the present volume, he parallels the Adirondacks, where he went to settle, away from the city. Three hundred acres he bought, and began to farm. Then the depression intruded. Eventually he fought the Delaware & Hudson—it had withdrawn train service on this remote line—and forced them to reinstall it. In such an encounter he recalls the fighting anger of that other Adirondack farmer, John Brown, and thus remains in a good tradition of dissent. His numerous black-and-whites, however, distract rather than reinforce, and say again that he is a better advocate than artist.

The Mexican portfolio of Paul Strand is all pictures and no comment. There they stand—20 picked shots of Mexico—silent hills, silvery skies, swarthy peasants dark as the earth, sombre-eyed children. More remarkable is the psychological penetration in Mr. Strand's religious subjects. He has portrayed no less than five devotional figures. The *dolor* of the Latin countries is in the "Cristo with Thorns"—sad, beautiful, tear-stained. In "The Virgin" a benediction is conferred upon the beholder. A "Calvario" captures both the sorrow and the desolation of the participants. Strand is not merely a beholder in these plates—he is *of* the figures he represents, and is religious in consequence. He has, of course, long been acclaimed for the flawlessness of his photographic prints. They still have that distinction. ("Photographs of Mexico," $15, Virginia Stevens, 48 Grove Street, New York.)

Mr. Strand is mentioned but not reproduced in "U. S. Camera 1940" (Random House, $2.95, 300 reproductions) which this year is commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of photography. A chronicle of this history is furnished by Elizabeth McCausland, while Edouard Steichen contributes not only two photographs but a statement explaining why this year's number emphasizes news photography. Many of the best shots come from this source. It might have been beneficial, nevertheless, to have a section devoted to photography as an art. After all, isn't the factual, the news angle, the scientific aspect being overdone a little?

And Paris

Gertrude Stein, of course, prefers the special taste of France. Justifiably so, too, because she distills from it her own fragrance. Two of her books grace our list. "Paris France," gathered $2.50), gathered while France was still secure, has the dough-smell of a good kitchen, it glistens with the beauty of Paris, carries to us the *habitants*. Excellent reproductions (8 in number) rival her text with their color. Her more recent "What Is Masterpieces" (Conference Press, Los Angeles, $2.50), illustrated by two supple drawings from the hand of Francis Picabia, modernist, is devoted to the Oxford-Cambridge lectures of the author, as well as to a group of her poems and portraits. Charming, but principally a Stein item.

France at war comes to us more forcefully, from *Verve VIII* (New York, $2.50), composed as it is of works assembled when France was still in the conflict. Even so, the harvest never slackened. Rouault's "Jeanne d'Arc" tears at our pity. Paul Valéry etches as well as writes with distinction. Matisse contributes a cover which required 26 printings, while Bonnard, Braque and others of eminence are present. *Verve VII* conveys an earlier period—"Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry" ($2.50)—in terms of an illuminated calendar. Notable little reproductions these—miniature gems embossed with a special process, like prayers of love.

Antedating even the de Berry calendar is the material in André Blum's "Origins of Printing & Engraving" (Scribner, 75 illustrations, $3.00). It burrows back into the most distant beginnings of Western printing, advances to fine woodcuts, and then switches off into engravings, finally discussing—as well as reproducing—even those in metal. Among the reproductions, the most tell-

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ing is a double-page fifteenth century woodcut, "Christ Bearing the Cross." The author of this soundly printed volume is Curator of the Rothschild Collection of prints in the Louvre, while the translator, H. M. Lydenberg, has long been connected with the New York Public Library.

And London

From across the Channel a most impressive importation is N. Pevsner's "Academies of Art, Past & Present" (Cambridge University Press & Macmillan, $6). Impeccably printed, bound with a singular durability and taste, this volume testifies to an England which reveres the book, even when under fire. As for its contents, it criticizes as well as surveys the course of art schools since they first appeared in Italy, late in the Renaissance. From Italy one follows them to France, observes their relationship to a statesman like Colbert, visits art-academies throughout the Continent and in England, and concludes with "Artists' Education Today." Only America is ignored—save for Mr. Wright's project at Taliesin—but since the Langren book supplies part of the omission, this is less regrettable than it might otherwise be. Pevsner's volume is to be recommended not only for its thoughtful text, but for 28 illustrations and a useful bibliography.

Jacob Epstein ("Let There Be Sculpture," Putnam's, $5) is as exclamatory as Mr. Pevsner is quiet. Easily the most controversial sculptor since Rodin, Mr. Epstein here narrates his story from childhood on New York's East Side to student days abroad and his later years in London. Forty-nine illustrations are included, and the sculptor's comment on the more compelling of his assignments. An uncouth strength is in Epstein, and no inconsiderable percipience as to his subjects. Many a battle is recorded here, and there can be no doubt that he has affirmed throughout his life the integrity of his own function. The ultimate place of the product is another matter.

Roger Fry, for example, saw him as a master craftsman rather than a great sculptor. Nevertheless, he championed Epstein in the famous "Rima row," when the Philistines were trying to pull his work down. That sense of responsibility stands out on every page of Virginia Woolf's sensitive biography of her friend ("Roger Fry," 16 illustrations, Harcourt Brace, $3.50). A Quaker, a man of means, a nonconformist, Fry was originally intended for the law and science. Art seduced him, however, and he became instead the foremost English art critic since Ruskin. American readers are particularly urged to examine the chapter on Mr. Fry and the Metropolitan. This episode has never before been revealed. Mr. Fry's appointment as Curator of Paintings, his relationship with the elder Morgan, his refusal to truckle, and his eventual resignation are all here first presented to the light. A thoughtful reader will remember them no less than the pellucid character of a man who insisted, as fully as Matthew Arnold, on the "best that has been known and thought in the world."

The University of Chicago Press ("Picasso Portfolio," by Helen F. Mackenzie, $2.00) is now seeking to forward that estimation of the moderns which Mr. Fry so well advanced. The present offering consists of 19 plates bearing 55 cuts of Picasso, ranged along with 79 others suggesting his sources. The work is an outgrowth of the Chicago Art Institute's Picasso show of this year. That restless painter is "explained" in this work and hence made more accessible to the public. Nevertheless one qualification remains: too much historical "drawing" may be harmful.

Oxford University Press, which has held first place among American art book publishers since it inaugurated its Phaidon series some three years ago, has outleaped itself in one of its two current volumes on Michelangelo. In the "Sculptures" (200 reproductions, $3) it has employed a photographer with an eye for both, so to say, the blow and the curve. He has caught the heroic, the grand, the subtle, and the well-nigh involuted in Michelangelo. He has penetrated the Medici Chapel and seen better with the camera than does the ordinary eye in that pervading gloom. In fact the thunderous majesty of Michelangelo reverberates throughout this volume. While the "Paintings" (200 reproductions, $3) is perhaps less apocalyptic, it, too, has its startling features, not least of which are two large folding plates which illustrate the ceiling and the lunettes of the Sistine Chapel. Certainly some of the heads are breath-taking, particularly the close-up of the "Jehovah," wherein one seems to be looking into the fire and the whirlwind. For these two volumes—the sculptures especially—one knows not whether to congratulate more the publishers, the photographer, or that understanding editor, Ludwig Goldscheider. In any case, here is something memorable for all to behold.

Mr. Weyhe's excellent volumes do not exactly compare, as they are more special. Yet "Les Oeuvres du Greco en Espagne," by Christian Zervos (224 plates, E. Weyhe, NYC, $6) might well be in the library of everyone who cares about this great mystical painter of the Church. Only his Spanish works are included, as Mr. Zervos has no doubts as to their authenticity, and since he also seems to prefer these among all his works. The photography is superb, both great and small. Here Greco may be seen close up (in enlargements) or afar off, in full length. It is a priceless book. "The Surviving Works of Sharaku," by Harold G. Henderson and Louis V. Ledoux (145 illustrations, $4) offers a *tour-de-force*, that of a

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painter who mocked the actors of the Japanese theatre by emulating them. Published to signalize a recent show at the Museum of Modern Art, it should stand as the definitive edition of a gifted but peculiar artist.

Yes, our vintage is improving. Many of these volumes do give occasion for celebrating Art Week. And yet . . . Where are the American painters? What publisher has seen fit to present the great tradition of our water-colorists? Where is the imagination to issue small-size volumes, paper-bound, on individual American artists? Where is the conviction that would support our finest contemporaries with the same fervor as the French? When American publishers show such enterprise, one will know that the roots are deeper. Meanwhile, the plant is already bearing; and only further cultivation is needed.

Views & Reviews

BY MICHAEL WILLIAMS

SUNDAY MASS today for this way-faring Catholic was more than usually satisfying. He hastens to add that personal and quite human, but, he hopes, not "all too human," reasons mingled with loftier spiritual causes which, he trusts, were also operative in making his obligatory church-going so pleasing. But that too is the marvelous mark of Catholicism—its everlasting faculty of unifying all things in humanity not positively corrupt or unmistakably evil with its own supernatural life and of working upon all non-evil human things toward their transfiguration. It was when the brief instruction period after the Gospel came that this commentator was given the special occasion for these desultory remarks.

In the little country church where today he happened to be, his own parish church, as a matter of fact—his professional travels often compel attendance elsewhere—the young curate read the Epistle and Gospel and the usual notices, while the pastor sat with the boys and girls whose prayers he had led: liturgical prayers, with brief, well-chosen words explaining luminously the intent and inner meaning of the ceremonies of the Mass. Surely it was not a harmful distraction to reflect, while still paying sufficient heed to the preacher, that something very important was going on in this country church, with its children from families of many racial strains and traditions, growing up to be citizens of a nation in which their ancient, old-world Catholicism needs must be not only as vital as ever it has been in Europe, but also must ever exert its deepest powers of development and reasonable accommodation to temporal conditions in order to exert and expand its redemptive mission to humanity. For these children are being given insights and appreciations and reasonable knowledge as well into and of and about their living religion, and its supreme point of expression, the everlasting miracle of the Mass. In far too many churches throughout our land, only yesterday, so to speak, many thousands of them never received such instruction; so that their obligatory attendance at Mass, in many cases only accidentally—or through mysterious and unpredictable operations of Grace—ever really supplied them with a truly Catholic understanding of their religion.

The young priest spoke, also, from a sanctuary recently redeemed by his pastor from the meretricious tawdriness of a high altar that had tried to make its old and discolored and cracking wooden gimcracks and furbelows resemble marble, against which the glaring statues—but why go on? We all know the lamentable things that are meant. But now the sanctuary is simple and honest and beautiful with the beauty of sincere craftsmanship that has respected its own function by remembering the true function of the sanctuary, of which the center is the altar and its tabernacle, yet which center itself is but instrumental to the higher center of the supernatural life flowing from the Master of Life. Therefore the altar and tablernacle and their surroundings are not, to the true Christian artists or craftsmen or worshippers, things to be either trifled with or neglected, still less are they things to be separated from their function for their own restricted sakes and made falsely pompous, or artificially decorative. On the contrary, they should be treated as they have been in this little country church—where, one is happy to note—a member of the Liturgical Arts Society was a member of the parish and, therefore, most happy to be available to the pastor, whose transformation of the sanctuary exterior is after all, striking as it is, merely symbolic of the spiritual transformation he is effecting in the inner life of his people.

Now as one who welcomed and helped, through his scribblings at least, the foundation and continuing work of the Liturgical Arts Society—the evidence of its participation in the beautiful transformation of his parish church was, of course, one of the human emotions present in his church-going mood today. But even more directly human was the grateful thrill that came when the young curate called attention to another work intended to be helpful to American Catholicism with which this commentator has had—and still has—something to do. For he called attention to "that excellent Catholic magazine, THE COMMONWEAL," and to its present special task, which chiefly concerned the curate in his remarks today: its collaboration with the artists who are offering Christmas cards to the public meant to bear the same relationship to the traffic in greeting cards as the work of the Litugical Arts Society sustains to the business of building churches and supplying their necessary adjuncts.

If only some stenographer or somebody with a really good verbal memory could have taken down what the young priest said, how gladly would his words be given in place of the commentator's at this point! For he did not merely point out, without sarcasm or reproach, yet firmly and clearly, the gross inappropriateness of making and using Christmas cards from which all memory or even reflection of Christmas meaning have fled—becoming when not starkly pagan mere conventional gestures of conventional courtesies. These are good things in themselves, of course, but at Christmas and Easter, for example, they

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are denials, in effect, of Christian truths, Christian motives, the Christian mission of spreading the news of the Gospel of Christ. Always this has been so; but now, as he told us, when the armed and mighty forces of the enemies of Christianity are conquering so many Christian lands the same organized, all-pervading elimination of everything Christian will proceed apace. And that same tide of anti-Christianity is spreading far and wide in our land, and one of its most pervasive instrumentalities is the secularization of the beautifully human and desirable custom of Christmas and Easter cards.

The substance, if not the forceful actual language, of the message given to his little congregation by this young assistant to a far-sighted country pastor, is passed along, in this place, in the general hope that it may do something to help the artists who with THE COMMONWEAL are doing their bit in this hopeful section of the front in the vast war on which we American Catholics are engaged, and must continue to be engaged, whether or not we blessedly escape taking part in the physical front of the war against our religion. That it is a hopeful part of the front was affirmed by the young curate, who evidently had been studying the situation, for he told us how even the most commercialized makers and purveyors of Christmas cards this year are stocking up with material less copiously adorned with reindeer, and lighted windows over snow, and country-club wreaths, etc., than of old; and again they are remembering some of the facts of the real Christmas history—the angels of the message of hope to those of good will; the Mother of the Christ Child: and that Child Himself. After all, THE COMMONWEAL may have justified at least a goodly part of all our expectations if this great enterprise succeeds, linking up with the general energy of our Church.

Communications

FEEDING EUROPE

Dubuque, Iowa.

TO the Editors: It was exceedingly startling as well as distressing to find that one of the most humane editorials ever to appear on the pages of THE COMMONWEAL—that signed by E. S. S. and titled "Blockading the Conquered Peoples of Europe" (October 18)—should be so bitterly attacked in two succeeding numbers by Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes (October 25) and Ruth Byrns (November 8) respectively, both contributing editors. E. S. S. summed up the entire issue in the succinct statement: "In assistance to Britain there are some weapons that are simply too inhuman. And starvation of innocent civilians, maiming a whole generation of fellow-humans in vanquished lands, is one of them." Professor Hayes spends two columns of print in attempting to demolish that statement and emerges even more sinister than when he previously advocated publicly no relief for the hapless peoples. Miss Byrns designates it mere sentimentality "to select the withholding of food" from the innocent victims "as an inhuman weapon." Herbert Hoover is "confused" and E. S. S. guilty of "aiding Germany"! And all this in utter contempt of that basic principle of Christian morality and Catholic theology: The end never justifies the means.

The question isn't one of "aiding" these blockaded peoples through donations like "Bundles to Britain." They will gladly pay from their gold reserves which our government holds and purchase our surplus stocks. It is rather a question of absolute fairness, justice and mercy, one in which, if England attempts to refuse its consent, we have all the obvious means at our disposal to win it. "But Hitler's promise not to seize the food-stuffs is worthless," maintain Professor Hayes and Miss Byrns. This may be cheerfully granted. Yet, as Mr. Hoover points out, we will not take Hitler at his word, we will judge him by his action: the whole matter of distribution is to be in American hands; let Hitler take but one boat-load, aye, let him seize but one sack of flour, and the venture will be immediately halted. In such a tremendously important affair fraught with so much weal or woe to so many millions of fellow-humans, we dare not halt in front of mere surmises, but only in the face of facts.

Furthermore, as has been repeatedly pointed out, the chances are overwhelming that Hitler will be only too willing to refrain from the slightest interference; for a peaceful condition among the at least partially fed conquered peoples would be preferable even from his point of view to the "howling hell" which Ambassador Cudahy predicted will ensue when starvation sets in. And it has never been definitely established that, whether these unhappy millions are fed or are starved, the result will have a telling effect on the issue of victory or peace for Britain. Why then in a matter of such grave doubt abandon so ruthlessly these innocent Christian peoples?

For those who like myself still have their kinsfolk among these sorely grieved and conquered peoples it is not so easy to swallow the fulminations of Professor Hayes and Miss Byrns, and especially their sophistry that the unfortunate inhabitants of the vanquished lands are "whether they will it or not, aiding Germany," and therefore must be cruelly starved to death. What diabolical reasoning! In the name of the common Heaven in which we believe, why don't these protagonists of British cruelty utter words of protest at America's coddling of Russia, if they are seeking a victim to blockade and starve? The Soviet's rape of Poland and Finland, of the Baltic States and Roumania is surpassed in heinousness only by her attack on Christianity. Millions of Christians, including many Catholics, have, according to W. H. Chamberlin and Eugene Lyons, been "liquidated," far more than in Hitler's Germany, and yet the perpetrators of this liquidation are ignored by Professor Hayes and Miss Byrns, who call only for the liquidation of innocent Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Belgians, Danes, etc.

Our nation will never live down the hate of these European countries whom we will have abandoned. We may save England, but we will have lost the last claim to decency and respect in the eyes of the mournful survivors among the agonized millions whose destruction, moral and physical, we will have attempted. *Oh, non talibus auxiliis!*

CHARLES F. LABARGE.

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The Stage & Screen

Hollywood Again

THE PAUCITY of invention in the theatre so far this season has been appalling, and in poverty of writing and general ineptness the three Hollywood plays, coming in a row, take the prize. The latest is "Glamour Preferred," something by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements that on the program is labeled "a comedy." As in the other two Hollywood plays it has to do with a lot of people, most of them disagreeable, who live luxuriously, have the morals of tom-cats, speak in a jargon which bears a faint resemblance to English and continually run in and out for no particular reason. They are also supposed to utter what are known as "wise-cracks," which are usually rather moronic imitations of the real thing. Why such an intelligent producer as Brock Pemberton and as capable a director as Antoinette Perry should have been mixed up in this is a mystery. One scene, however, is interestingly written, seeming as if it had somehow strayed in from a real comedy. This is a scene where the English baronet tells the wife of the movie star that he loves her. Robert Craven is the baronet, and gave one of the most delightful performances I have seen in recent years. Mr. Craven is a comedian whose charm, authority and technical resource ought to carry him far—let us hope, however, not to Hollywood, but to a better play on Broadway than "Glamour Preferred." (*At the Booth Theatre.*)

I have spoken of the general lack of vigor in ideas which the season has shown up to date, but this could be forgiven if there had been any charm or distinction in the writing. Fragile plays often are delightful in the writing, and properly played are sometimes the biggest hits. "Life With Father" is an example; there is in it practically no story, but the writing, the sly characterizations and the acting have made it the greatest popular success in years. But it is about nice people, and nice people make possible subtlety of characterization. Vulgarity is in essence lack of sensitiveness, and without sensitiveness there can be no subtlety, indeed no poetry. Most of the plays we are getting now are essentially vulgar, which means that they are limited in range. After a long list of plays dealing with well-bred people, a vulgar one or two may seem as an access of vitality, but when vulgar plays are the rule they soon become wearisome. By vulgarity I do not mean only vulgarity of language, though here the utter lack of variety is bad enough; I mean rather vulgarity of spirit. It isn't that these plays are about uneducated people, or even that they are written by uneducated people; it is that they are written in a spirit which confounds the writer with his material; the writer instead of standing outside his material, judging it by artistic or esthetic standards, sinks himself approvingly in it. This is the state the Broadway theatre seems to have got itself into, and it is time it got itself out. If it does not, the movies will soon see to it that we have no theatre at all.

GRENVILLE VERNON.

"Once in a Lifetime"

"*FANTASIA*" is a rare treat. If you live in one of the twelve lucky cities in which it is playing and if you want a new esthetic thrill, you'd better hurry over for a ticket. It is unusual cinema in the first place, because the music came first. Leopold Stokowski led the Philadelphia Orchestra in the recording of compositions by Tchaikovsky, Bach, Stravinsky, Schubert—eight in all, covering a wide range of musical tastes. Then Walt Disney and his staff listened again and again until they were able to capture for the screen the colored pictures that the music suggested. The result is "Fantasia"—a synchronized rhythm of sight and sound that is neither an ordinary animated cartoon nor a high brow interpretation of music.

The theatre is darkened. You see on the screen the men of the orchestra taking their places. You don't exactly see them so much as their silhouettes. You hear their instruments being tuned. Deems Taylor, who acts as commentator before each composition, appears, explains that "Fantasia" is the designs and stories that might pass through your mind as you listen to this music. Mr. Stokowski rises, lifts his arms and the concert starts. As the tone patterns of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor fill the theatre, you see the famous Stokowski hands, the shadowy orchestra playing, colors forming vague arrangements and designs that change with this abstract music. Next comes the Nutcracker Suite, and Disney is at his best with Dewdrop Fairies making beautiful sparkles; Mushroom Dancers, in a few unbelievably delicious moments that bring a round of applause, doing the Chinese Dance and little Hop Low having a terrible time keeping up with them; the Blossom Ballet turning and swirling; the Thistles and Orchids dancing in a riot of color; pollen becoming the lovely Milkweed Ballet as Autumn Fairies release them from their pods; Snowflake Fairies skating gracefully on a frozen pond.

Then our old friend Mickey turns up as the Sorcerer's Apprentice. While you hear Dukas's music, you see Mickey Mouse trying his hand at magic that runs away with him. This is conventional stuff for Disney, and though charming is soon forgotten when the orchestra blares into Stravinsky and the violent Rite of Spring takes us back a couple of billion years to planets whirling through space, the first growths of life (from blobs and amoebas to amphibians and dinosaurs), and earthquakes, flowing lava and floods. This is probably the most exciting and daring interpretation of the whole program; and incidentally it teaches almost as much Historical Geology as does a whole school semester in that subject. The least successful item in the series is the mythological setting for Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, in which prudish prettiness, love-sick centaurs, coy centaurettes and a burlesque Bacchus are only made acceptable by mischievous fauns, lightning-tossing Zeus and a Disneyish family of Pegasi.

A delightful note of humor is introduced into "Fantasia" when Deems Taylor persuades the visualized sound track to react to various instruments. But the most hilarious number on the program is the exceedingly funny

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parody inspired by Ponchinelli's Dance of the Hours. Ballet is kidded unmercifully when Ostriches try to be graceful as the early hours, Hyacinth Hippo and her handmaidens portray the languors of the day, elephants get coquettish with bubbles in twilight, alligators leap about in sinister night, and the *tout ensemble* carry on vile in the finale. The closing numbers of the concert are a picturization of struggle between profane and sacred. Moussorgsky's shrieking Night on Bald Mountain becomes doubly effective with a mad Walpurgis Night dance of demons, skeletons and ghastly riotous figures under the prince of Evil. A bell tolls. Death and Despair return to their graves. A long line of hooded figures wind their way with lighted tapers through a cathedralesque forest as you hear Schubert's Ave Maria. "Fantasound," the new system of reproduction for the excellent recording used throughout, swells the auditorium with a glorious music that comes from all parts of the theatre. "Fantasia" may have its faults (it is too long and some of it is too loud, for one thing), and it will no doubt be improved upon next time it is done, but to Walt Disney now should go fresh laurels for giving us a new artistic experience of great beauty—another milestone in the motion picture.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Books of the Week

Money

The Real Danger in Our Gold. Harry Scherman. S. & S. $1.00.
The Fall of the Golden Empire. Srinivas Wagel. Ernest D. Kracht. $1.00.

BOOKS on money have been coming out as thick as peanuts in recent years. Unfortunately the output is largely confusing. Professional economists generally use a vocabulary as specialized as that of Einstein, while popular writers concentrate on special pleading—for or against this or that type of money scheme. The result is acute bewilderment, rendered the more painful as people realize the importance of the subject. If even the experts can't agree, what is the common man supposed to think—or to do?

The two books on gold listed above are an excellent example in point. Both Mr. Scherman and Mr. Wagel are violently opposed to the government's gold policy—but for opposite reasons! Mr. Scherman (the president of the Book-of-the-Month Club and author of "The Promises Men Live By") scouts the popular notion that the government has been paying a prohibitive price for worthless gold, and will soon be left "holding the bag." Gold, he affirms, is the only international money, and convertibility into gold is the only guarantee of the worth of our bank deposits and paper currency. The right to own gold is a fundamental right of free men and the principal safeguard of other rights as well—since it gives the citizens control over their government. Lacking confidence in its fiscal policies or in its good faith, they can ship gold abroad, or hoard it in their own country, and thus force the government to terms. This power is especially important now, in order to keep the government from revaluing gold upward again, using the profit on its own holdings to write off some huge portion of the federal debt.

Mr. Wagel, on the other hand, attacks the government, not as having taken away a valued right from the people of this country through its monopoly of gold ownership, but as having been the dupe of a worn out notion that gold has any value at all! According to Mr. Wagel, the glitter of gold had a marvelous attraction for the ignorant savage—and its symbolism has perversely lingered on ever since in a world which no longer has any real use for it. The classic attributes of gold which were supposed to make it an ideal monetary medium—intrinsic desirability, durability, portability, universal acceptability and stability of value—no longer apply to it, if indeed they ever applied at all. Modern banking and credit methods, plus world wide exploitation of gold mines for private profit, have sounded the death knell of gold as money. Barter, trade agreements and the settling of balances in other more portable symbols of ownership—such as bills of exchange, stocks, bonds, etc.—will probably replace gold in the world of the future. And our government will be left with a total loss of at least $10,000,000,000 out of the $20,000,000,000 or so of gold now reposing at Fort Knox.

It seems to this reviewer that both of these authors run into confusion of thought through failing to distinguish between the use of gold as money, and the special usages of the old-fashioned, gold-redemption standard. Mr. Scherman speaks time and again of the importance of *convertibility into gold* as the measure of the value of money. Now convertibility into gold is not only not necessary in order to establish the value of money—it is not even possible, since there is usually about ten times as much bank deposit and currency money in the world as there is gold. In other words the old gold redemption standard could only work so long as 90 percent of people did not try to use it.

Well, if convertibility is not the measure of value, what is? The answer, in a modern banking world, is surely the ability of banks to *settle the balances left over by the transactions of the bank's customers.* We can all see this clearly enough in international trade. If Frenchmen buy $1,000,000 worth of American goods, and Americans buy only $900,000 of French goods, $100,000 of gold suffices to "clear" the transactions, and the unit of gold used for this purpose *measures the value of all of them.* The same principle applies within a single country. The monetary unit used for clearance purposes establishes the value of all the transactions entered into. And any large scale postponement of clearance through further extensions of credit tends to become inflationary.

In this connection Mr. Wagel's barter suggestions are only a dodge, avoiding the real issue. Obviously if the imports and exports of every country to each other single country exactly balanced, *there would be no need for clearance at all.* But it is precisely the impossibility of exactly balancing each nation's trade with that of each other individual nation that makes some internationally recognized and accepted medium of exchange necessary. For proof of this, look at the difficulties attendant upon the barter trade of Germany and Italy. Schacht himself is quoted as saying, "You don't think we do this from choice, do you?" No, it is hard enough to balance up the total imports and exports of a country, without having to balance up the trade with each nation separately. Our ancestors in the rum-molasses-slave trade, however benighted they may have been in a moral sense, at least recognized the importance of three way traffic!

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Mr. Wagel's alternate proposal of settling international balances with stocks, bonds, bills of exchange, etc., has even worse disadvantages than his barter proposals. Fancy settling trade balances with American stocks in 1929! However much gold may fluctuate in value through the exploitation of gold mines, it could never hope to compete with even our most gilt-edged securities. As for bills of exchange, they are only a creditor's claim on money in one country, anyway, and thus represent a form of barter again.

One hopes that readers of books like these will think through to the logical consequences of some of their proposals. Most of Mr. Scherman's book makes very sound sense. His exposition of the necessity for an internationally recognized medium of exchange and his defense of gold for that purpose are readable and convincing. But to put a country deliberately at the mercy of international speculators, and incidentally of totalitarian governments as well, through the free and unlicensed convertibility of bank deposits and currency into gold seems at least as dangerous as our present gold policy. The latter exposes us only to the risk of a gradual price inflation which could easily be accomplished by other methods, anyway; the former could undermine the whole basis of our money system, as it has done to other countries in the past.

Mr. Wagel's suggestions seem still more risky. Like all barter proposals, they would eventually make international trade so complicated as to be almost impossible. In addition, he betrays a surprising lack of understanding of modern banking processes—and especially of the principle of clearance. The fact that 92 percent of all transactions are paid for merely by balancing off IOU's, is no justification for his theory that "actual money, or gold reserves, have little meaning *vis à vis* business and national activity —except that it is part of the *abracadabra* of banking." Such statements are inaccurate and misleading. They certainly do not tend to promote a wider understanding of money problems. E. CARROLL SKINNER.

FICTION

For Us the Living. Bruce Lancaster. Stokes. $2.75.
Bright Journey. August Derleth. Scribner. $2.50.

BOTH these novels describe the growth of the American West through the 1820's and the 1830's. Both writers are aware of the appeal of the senses: a canoe journey through the rapids, the pungent personality of a general store, the dialectal symphony of voices spoken in council or raised in village argument. Both paint their backgrounds with the brush of history: the ever-pending danger of Indian uprisings; the effects of governmental incompetence and unconcern; life and law as primitive and personal as hand-drawn maps; the crude materialism of Astor and the uncontrolled idealism of Robert Owen.

Derleth's novel, his fourth about the Sac Prairie district of Wisconsin, cleaves close to the narrative method. His story is that of Hercules Dousman, who represents the American Fur Company in one of its outposts, who plans to grow wealthy and does, who believes in compromise and fairness and now and then expresses his views on them. The author admits his indebtedness to historical sources for the portrait, and it never shakes off the dull factualness of state records. The other characters also lack vitality: Joe Rolette is a trader who drinks and neglects his wife; John Marsh, once actually the terror of the district, symbolizes treachery and stirs up distant trouble among the Sioux; army men, traders and Indian chiefs come to the company office to seek favors or to bring news. The reader witnesses little action, although he is told of much. He sees inside no one person, with the exception of the vivid Frenchwoman, Jane Rolette, who stands apart from the figures in the puppet show by virtue of her refreshing gaiety, amusingly sharp tongue, variety of emotions and strength of heart. She and the Indian, Red Bird, whose magnificent courage is revealed by one brief spotlight, are the strengths of the book.

Bruce Lancaster dispenses with the spot and uses floodlights. He works on the grand scale, playing absorbing action against sets from which the paint has been worn thin by frequent use. His achievement is the greater in that he brings new life to the familiar story of the great westward trek, already familiar in Winston Churchill and James Boyd. Further novelty would be improper in the retelling of the hunger or stupidity, the hope or despair of the "mover," ever seeking new homes free from taxes or milk-sickness or Indians; the brutal wrestling matches of men who rolled keelers and broadhorns down the rivers; the hypontic hold a panther has on a hunter, slow in ramming an ancient muzzle-loader, or a circuit-rider roaring a sinner into a "religious" fit; the thrill of watching a community rise from logs, and the ironic after-pain of place-names—New Harmony, New Broaddock and New Salem; the barrenness of a one-room cabin, miles from a spring, inches from a winter wind.

The effectiveness in such retelling comes because the author uses the fresh young eyes of Hugh Brace—enduring granite as a type, warm flesh as a person. Hugh is full-drawn, and one is fully aware of his maturing. The reader is disturbed with him by his father's spoiled flamboyance, smarts from the jibes against his shrunken arm, is worried by his mother's blind acceptance of bleak journeying, stunned by the tremendous situation of facing a wilderness when axe, rifle, flour and horse have all been stolen. One watches strength of hand and character emerge as he clears brush, drives the wooden wheels of an ox-cart laden with produce through wild strawberries to a river dock, observes the commotion of a wedding feast and a tavern brawl, puzzles through to the meaning of space and state boundaries, window glass and collars, people and rights. Personal calm comes also to the reader from Hugh's mastery after set-backs, his career as foreman, fighting blizzards and labor's indifference, as supply wagoner in the Black Hawk war, as a business man, unique in honesty and foresight, as a suitor made slowly aware of the meaning of love.

The mother, Zilla, is equally well drawn: battered and crushed, devoted alike to the memory of dead children and to the recollected orders of a husband who abandons her, she is as drab, and as heroic, as a faded flag. Matt Brace, her husband, is a self-appointed patriarch who frowns professionally, who takes all and who sidles through life to a bitter death.

One of their chance meetings is with Tom and Sarah Lincoln, and young Abe walks thereafter through living pages. Although all the familiar faces are here—the log-splitter, the champion wrestler, the omnivorous reader, the talker who began "runnin' the country crost the counter," the homely, awkward, humorous, honest figure —Abe is not pictured as a myth, but as a man. He remains a secondary character, and, like the rest of the story, evolves in relation to Hugh Brace. It is only in the last pages, when Lancaster allows him long speeches, fits him out in

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the cloak of the "mystic," developed so well by Carl Sandburg, and tries to show in his "figgerin' " about life the wellsprings from which came the phrases and convictions of his later Gettysburg Address, that Lincoln takes the lead.

It is refreshing to find faith in mankind expressed so simply. The pioneer has suffered from exaggerated treatment by American writers: he has been either the epitome of initiative and bravery, narrow individualism or extravagant grandeur, or stupid, cruel, worthless scum. Lancaster has taken care to show that men come from many molds: river-pirates and racketeers, monopolists and counterfeiters, men who cheat Indians of land or Negroes of liberty, walk his pages. So do men who keep free speech alive in tavern conversation and formal debate, men who know the significance of true charity, whether in mending a weakened axle or a rusty law, in rebuilding a schoolhouse or a broken soul. There is perfect contrast, perhaps deliberate, in the persons of Split-Log Strothers and William Murdoch.

The whole book is worked with homely threads, brightening an already vivid pattern: there are scattered snatches of forgotten songs, local superstition and folk-lore, recipes and tall stories. The reader drops in constantly for an appetizing "dish of conversation." The entire approach is amazingly refreshing; reading "For Us the Living" is an adventure in America. JAMES EDWARD TOBIN.

Mighty Mountain. Archie Binns. Scribner. $2.75.
Hildreth. Harlow Estes. Dodd. $2.50.

THE first of these novels, "Mighty Mountain," is a story of the northwest. Elmer out of Massachusetts rediscovers Uncle Jarvis, Harvard graduate, living contentedly with squaw among the big trees and salmon-crammed streams. Elmer catches on to the idea, and claims a few hundred acres of this desirable country, spends part of a day in hectic courtship, increases acreage in view of law's grant to married men. He has built his own cabin in the woods, very satisfying, and now takes his wife (incidentally, *not* a squaw, but an Oregon-trailer-adoptee of a tobacco-chewing intransigeant family with race prejudices) to live with him. The hero's instincts are, on the whole, sound, though, on first viewing this new country via New England shipping he saw a girl of the wild Haidah tribe (who crosses his path once later on) who seems to have something wife Lisette lacks. This leads the hero to make some reflections—not too unlike those of a Yankee horse trader or a connoisseur of *objects d'art*—anyhow basically materialistic and Puritan, about comparative merits of Haidah girl and Lisette. But Lisette unbends, acts like an animal, and all is saved.

The settlers suffer from Indian trouble. Governor Steevans, ruined-childhood-Yankee-grit-survival-tyrant, first tries to cheat the Indians, then tries his hand at exterminating them. Leschi, noble Indian chieftain, whose wisdom and kindliness and culture stand in the way of the onward march, is treacherously executed. But the law is preserved. The author is Puritan in his outlook here . . . the law must be preserved no matter what sort of law it is. "Leschi was innocent, and he was murdered. But it was judicial murder. If the army and his friends had taken the law into their own hands, God knows where it would have ended." Well, supposing God *did* know?

There is real beauty in the book, a love of natural things that is the beginning of wisdom. But it is intel-

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lectually adolescent—the author still has to learn about men and women and sin, about real conflicts and about real human motives. His attitude is basically bourgeois—an attitude that does not permit finalities—that covers up everything hygienically with a little unplausible pantheism.

The second novel, "Hildreth," written with real verve and a genuine knowledge of the New England character (God help us), contains all the bourgeois values in their unquestioned fruition. It is an intimate, corsety sort of book with a soandso lot of vulgarity. The children of Laura, attractive widow, consist of the rudest, crudest crew of young soandsos that it has ever been the privilege of this reviewer to meet. Hildreth, niece to Laura, has natural human instincts and is in love with Geoff, who is masculine-worked-himself-through-college-took-favors-from-nobody-son-of-a-suicide-who-committed-suicide-because-he-lost-his-money-slaving-for-his-wife-who-had-money-and-he-was-not-going-to-be-under-obligations-to-wife-who-had-money-but-prove-himself-with-his-own-money-worthy-of-her-money. Hildreth is in love with the fellow but he is, alas, so sensitive—he may go and commit suicide if his self-respect is injured. He is out of work but it might insult him to give him a job; he needs money, but if he took it from women he might be considered a gigolo. A noble fellow—no wonder two New England women fall in love with him.

Maritain says of the bourgeois liberal, "A whole nominalist and idealist metaphysic is latent in him. Hence in the world he has created, the preeminence of the *sign*: of opinion in political life, of money in the economic sphere."

Everybody in the book has a nominalist conscience. To be considered a gigolo by the right people is worse than to be a gigolo. In the latter case industry and thrift might counterbalance the nature of the activity.

The setting is Maine. It is *au courant*. It abides by the sign. The Catholic readers will, however, object to its extensive use of soandso. WILLIAM J. GRACE.

On the Long Tide. Laura Krey. Houghton. $2.75.

LAURA KREY is one of our many contemporaries who have confused reasonably diligent historical research with the writing of a novel. Like most of our "historical novelists," Mrs. Krey does not write well. She has not even, like John Jennings, a feeling for the flow of history. This, her second novel, deals with the founding of Texas, a time of profound change, violent action and much movement. Mrs. Krey has managed to eliminate virtually every significant action of this time from her book and has filled in the gaps with weary recitals of several pallid love affairs, some inane conversations between the hero and prominent characters of his time, and some quainte, olde remarks by negro slaves.

To manage to come right up to such events as the battle of New Orleans, the seige of the Alamo, Long's expedition into Texas, then to skip these (they require the difficult skill of describing action) and resume again when they are all over and mentioned in restrospect in the hero etc.'s inane conversations, is in itself a remarkable feat, but hardly good or even adequate writing. Mrs. Krey's people lack passion, their motivation is shadowy and without urgency, and it is doubtful if anyone has ever managed to write of such a violent place as Texas early in the nineteenth century with so much dull placidity. Far from gilding the lily Mrs. Krey has clothed it in a Mother Hubbard. HARRY SYLVESTER.

ESSAYS

Essays and Verses. Russell Wilbur. S. & W. $1.75.

SHORTLY after Theodore Roosevelt's death, a Catholic priest who was a friend of his wrote a series of *in memoriam* sonnets. About twenty of them appeared in a single issue of the *New Republic*. The whole series was published by Houghton Mifflin. He had never felt impelled to write poetry before, and he wrote none again until suddenly, about seven years ago, he produced the pieces that are in this book. These he sent me for my criticism which, as he had become a friend of mine, I gave almost brutally, writing my comments on the margin of the manuscript. The next person to be shown these verses was Mrs. Longworth, and when I said—remembering that I had jotted down comments that were hardly fit for a lady's eye. "You don't mean to say that you let her see what I wrote," he returned casually, "Oh, Alice is all right." Those poems, along with a few others, are in "Essays and Verses." The dedication is to Archbishop Glennon; but three vindicatory sonnets are inscribed to me and another of Father Wilbur's friends. Like the Roosevelt series, they are strong and rugged and interesting, the work of a real man, but it is difficult to know how to classify them as poetry. Here and there a line flares out that any poet would be glad to have written. One of these is "Perched on her crag Brunnhilde sleeps." But for the most part the verses are hoarse and rough. Russell Wilbur has tried to mould granite and has magnificently failed. He says of himself,

> A tragic sense and ribald wit dispute
> For mastery.

It was because he was a tragic figure and a wit that most people thought of him as an eccentric. But he had a fine philosophical mind, though he was always too busy enjoying the delights of wild conversation to employ it systematically. I find now that the theodicy of the concluding sonnets was that of our last talk when, as we sat together in the back seat of a car, he explained how he had solved the problem of God's foreknowledge and our free-will that had not been quite successfully encompassed either by Saint Augustine or Saint Thomas Aquinas.

The essays are as striking as the poems and perhaps his prose "comes off" rather better than his verse. Here are some excerpts: "It is not a tame universe but, by divine permission, wild—game-flavored as a hawk's wing." "Mystical animals can't be caught." "The incurable restlessness of the human heart is an evidence that whether we ever did fall or not, at least we are fallen." "Everything which the earliest chapters of Genesis relate—the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Serpent and, above all, the Angel with the flaming sword—exist somehow . . . in the depths of every human heart." It need hardly be said that the book is well worth reading, and will repay rereading.

I am tempted to give a portrait of my friend. But he was not the kind of figure that can be painted as a miniature on ivory. So let me instead tell a story, which may or may not be true, but which is at all events characteristic of the man. Soon after his ordination—he had been a Anglican archdeacon at Fond du Lac—he was sent to his first parish at Saint Louis. The pastor to whom he was assigned had had a succession of curates, each of whom had gone after a few months to the Archbishop wailing, "Please send me somewhere else! nobody can get along with that crab." When the old pastor

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received him he grunted, "Like a drink?" The curate measured his man and took the bottle and poured out three-quarters of a glass which he drained at a gulp. "Good God!" came the admiring comment, "You ought to have been in the Catholic Church years ago." It was the pastor, not the curate, who was tamed. And until his death last August Russell Wilbur continued to be his utterly unconventional self. Here he is in this unconventional little book. I wish only that it included the Roosevelt sonnets. THEODORE MAYNARD.

BRIEFERS

Green Enchantment. Rosetta E. Clarkson. Macmillan. $3.00.

THE author writes of herbalists and herbals from the Middle Ages into the eighteenth century, successfully projecting the attraction which gardens and useful and decorative herbs held for the centuries of transition into the modern era. Although written principally for the spirit and charm, the book is an excellently illustrated and descriptive bibliography and encyclopedia of horticulturists covering the period up to Linnaeus.

Roundabout South America. Anne Merriman Peck. Harper. $3.00.

THE AUTHOR'S trip to Ecuador, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil was not terribly studious nor exhaustive, but it was civilized, interesting and intelligently taken. While not being a deep study of South America, it indicates the possibilities before the good traveler and tourist who tries. In the nature of the travel book, more observations are stimulating than conclusive. This book seems more suited to encourage one to plan a trip to South America than to serve as guide on the spot.

Sergeant Lamb's America. Robert Graves. Random. $2.50.

ONE of the *n* books of the year with a map inside the covers, but in few ways a usual historical novel for Americans. The author, of course, and the Sergeant too, are British, and so the approach to the American Revolution in this instance is very loyalist, however courteous. In the sandy dry style (rendered early nineteenth century) he used successfully in writing about the Emperor Claudius and Count Belasarius, Robert Graves gives the life of a British soldier from his youth in Dublin until his capture at Saratoga, with more indicated to follow. Unless it is a most authentic reconstruction of the life and history of the American revolutionary period, which is the intent, it is a remarkable construction of literary craftsmanship. Indians, Jacobins, gentlemen, forests, battles; all observed from a more professional than romantic viewpoint.

As the Seed Is Sown. Christine Whiting Parmenter. Crowell. $2.50.

A WOMEN'S novel dealing with unhappy marriage among the well to do. A story told alternately by a boy and a girl which would have been more effective if narrated in the customary direct manner. Despite the subject, the style is pleasant and undisturbing.

Let's Celebrate Christmas. Horace J. Gardner. Barnes. $2.50.

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The Inner Forum

THE TWENTY-SIXTH annual meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Charities opened with a solemn pontifical Mass at the Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, November 17. Archbishop Stritch of Chicago was the celebrant; Bishop Alter of Toledo in his sermon to the delegates made a strong plea for greater understanding between the aims of social work and of the works of mercy. Delegates of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which is meeting in conjunction with Catholic Charities and which numbers 50,000 members in its 2,500 parish "conferences" throughout the country, assisted at a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Kiley of Milwaukee in old St. Mary's Church. Reports from the opening sessions of the Conference indicated that more than 3,000 delegates from all sectors of the country were in attendance, including 71 bishops and archbishops, several hundred priests and 600 Sisters. Speakers on the program numbered 118 and came from 36 states.

The theme of the Conference was "How to make more fruitful the Christian virtue of charity in the complicated conditions of modern society." Archbishop Stritch spoke of this theme in his address of welcome and called attention to the "great danger in the tendency to give civil authority the whole duty of caring for the poor and the underprivileged." The Archbishop asserted that "civil welfare work must never supplant almsgiving but only supplement it that all needs may be relieved." His address of welcome was broadcast over a nationwide radio network.

Most of the Conference was given over to meetings on specific problems. There was special emphasis on child welfare including such aspects as children's agencies, foster care, Catholic youth movements, the prevention of juvenile delinquency, diocesan and regional youth programs and relations with public agencies in the field. The committee on families discussed public assistance and Catholic family agencies together with the problem of giving counsel. The committee on social and economic problems dealt with workmen's compensation, unemployment compensation and "social problems in the present crisis." The committee on health took up medical care for needy farm families, medical and hospital programs in small towns and rural areas, out-patient service from Catholic hospitals, Negro health problems, Catholic health service in a changing economic order and hospitals as health centers.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jerome MELLQUIST is an art critic whose work has appeared in various magazines. His book, "Camera to Palette," is to be published by Scribner next spring.

E. Carroll SKINNER is an economist and business analyst who has made a special study of the money question.

James Edward TOBIN teaches English in the Graduate School of Fordham University.

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Harry SYLVESTER is working on a novel in Pennsylvania; he writes short stories for *Colliers*.

Theodore MAYNARD's last book is a biography of Queen Elizabeth, published a few months ago.

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